

Fall 2005 Vol. 11, No.3

# ATN!

## ALL TOGETHER NOW

Quality care and education for all children



**Natural Environments**

A publication of  
**Partnerships for Inclusion**  
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## Editor's Notes

Summer has come and gone. The scent of fall wafts past us in parking lots and playgrounds, even on hot days. Leaves drop and spin as the light changes from bright sun to warm gold. Every few days a cool wind blows through; soon enough winter will be here.



**Brady Fowler**

Fall is the time for transitions, when infants join a new child care center, or a toddler steps haltingly into preschool, when a child has grown so big they can go to kindergarten! Every parent plans for these transitions, and families of children with special needs know how important these transitions are to the success of their child's development.

It's been my privilege to learn about the world of inclusion: the parents, providers, service agencies, professionals and educators who make that world possible. I'm glad I had a chance to meet you, to meet your children and tell your stories in this magazine. As ATN! moves into a new era, and I make my own transition to a new home on the West Coast, I am proud to have been your ATN! editor. Thanks everybody.

## TOC



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<b>3</b>	<b>Concept</b>	<b>Routines-based assessment</b> by Sherri Britt
<b>6</b>	<b>Policy Update</b>	<b>Changes in the star ratings</b> by Peggy Ball
<b>8</b>	<b>Research</b>	<b>Benefits of bilingual learning</b> by Dina Castro
<b>10</b>	<b>Books</b>	<b>Reviews</b> by Brady Fowler
<b>12</b>	<b>Contact</b>	<b>Latest PFI contact info</b> plus contacts for CDSAs statewide
<b>14</b>	<b>Family Focus</b>	<b>The circle of friends</b> by Lisa Figueroa
<b>16</b>	<b>Feature</b>	<b>Independence Day is every day</b> by Caroline Butler
<b>20</b>	<b>Ask PFI</b>	<b>Developing skills in natural ways</b> by Libby Wilson
<b>22</b>	<b>Spotlight</b>	<b>Encounter at the puppet show</b> by Brady Fowler
<b>24</b>	<b>Programs</b>	<b>Reaching the 5 Stars</b> The latest programs to receive 5 stars

## Connecting evaluation to a child's daily life

# Routines-based assessment

*How do we best assess an infant with complex, multiple medical problems? In this article we see how a multidisciplinary team of child service professionals works together to create a new kind of developmental evaluation, based in the home and centered around the family.*

**N**athaneal Bottoms smiles and looks around as Cindy and Brenda talk to him. He really seems to like the toy that Brenda holds way up high, and he turns his head as she dangles it from one side to another. Nathaneal's mother, Debbie, laughs and picks him up. He looks up at her as she talks about their last trip to the doctor and his very first visit to their family's church the day before. Debbie talks about all of the things she has learned as a new mother. She shares several of her techniques for keeping things organized, including her "file" just for Nathaneal's important information and an organization chart on the refrigerator to help the whole family keep up with his medication schedule. Nathaneal's grandmother and grandfather are nearby. They smile adoringly as he pulls his hands up to his mouth. His tiny fingers finally slip inside his mouth as he coos contently. Nathaneal's father, Stevie, proudly points out the bird

feeder he placed just outside the window beside Nathaneal's bed and talks about how much his son enjoys watching and listening to the birds. Stevie mentions his hopes for Nathaneal, including his anticipation of the day when they will be able to play ball in the backyard and cheer on Stevie's favorite team, the UNC Tarheels.

To most this would sound like a typical family gathering, perhaps a welcome home party for Nathaneal or an afternoon cook-out. Actually, it is a developmental evaluation in Nathaneal's home, provided by the Rocky Mount Children's Developmental Services Agency. Cindy is a Family Nurse Practitioner, and Brenda is an Educational Diagnostician.

The reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 2004 and the recent redesign of North Carolina's



**by Sherri Britt**  
Regional Consultant,  
NC Early Intervention Branch,  
Division of Child Development





Can you hear my heart beat?

Early Intervention System have stimulated renewed emphasis on providing services to children with special needs in the natural environment. Most families and professionals involved in the NC Infant-Toddler Program already have experienced the benefits of receiving developmental and specialized therapy services into their daily routines and settings. Now attention is being paid to how children are assessed.

Early Intervention services are required under federal law to "...enhance the capacity of families to meet the special needs of their infants and toddlers with disabilities..." and to include assessments identifying these unique family needs (IDEA, 2004).

Since assessments are an integral part of the intervention planning process, a routines-based, family-centered approach is encouraged. Research supports the efficacy of conducting evaluations in this way. When assessment happens in a setting that is comfortable and familiar to the child, families become active participants, and can understand the relevance of the assessment process to their child's daily life.

### Approaches to assessment

Research shows that traditional assessment of children, particularly in a clinic-based setting using only standardized tools, is not conducive to obtaining an accurate, overall picture of a child's development and ability

to cope and function in the context of everyday routines and family life (Linder, 2003). Often, children and families are anxious in clinical settings with unfamiliar people. They don't see the connection between the testing experience and their daily lives and concerns. When assessment instruments isolate developmental skills and domains without examining the child's level of functioning in other developmental domains, it is difficult to develop meaningful plans to help families function effectively in their unique daily routines and interactions.

Functional assessment, on the other hand, provides insight into the typical settings, interactions and routines of a child; it targets everyday opportunities which already exist as established, meaningful events in the family's life (Bailey & Wolery, 1984). An effective assessment identifies the family's concerns, priorities, resources, successes and challenges in daily life (Berman & Shaw, 1997).

The NC Infant-Toddler Program supports this family-centered assessment approach based upon and guided by family settings and routines. Conducting assessments in the natural environment makes it easy to design and deliver interventions for children with special needs. "Providing early intervention services within the child's typical daily living activities increases the

number of learning opportunities and enhances the meaningfulness of what is learned (Growing Up Naturally, 2002).

### Who provides evaluations?

As local lead agencies, the Children's Developmental Services Agencies (CDSAs) in NC are responsible for the provision of the Infant-Toddler Program. As part of that responsibility, these CDSAs are charged with determining eligibility and planning services for the families involved with our state's early intervention program. As a result, Rocky Mount CDSA, along with the other 17 CDSAs in NC, has restructured the evaluation/assessment process so that it can become a truly integrated and meaningful process.

Rocky Mount CDSA, under the direction of Pat Adams, began their planning by having selected staff attend training which focussed on the philosophy of natural environments and the concepts of routines-based, family-centered, and functional assessments.

The agency brought in NC Regional Physical Therapy Consultant Karen Haas, NC Regional Early Intervention Consultant Sherri Britt, and NC Early Intervention Branch Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement director Sherry Franklin to facilitate staff and team conferences and workgroups, and to provide technical assistance in the



Nathaneal relaxes in his crib.

interpretation of policy and recommended practices.

Rocky Mount CDSA decided to address the goal of providing 100% of entry evaluations within the natural environment by starting with a “pilot” team that works out of the Halifax-Northampton satellite office of the Rocky Mount CDSA. This multidisciplinary team is composed of:

- ▶ Service Coordinator Supervisor
- ▶ Physical Therapist
- ▶ Family Nurse Practitioner
- ▶ Psychologist
- ▶ 2 Educational Diagnosticians
- ▶ 2 Clinical Social Workers
- ▶ 3 Early Intervention Service Coordinators.

The team worked diligently to devise a process for scheduling, planning, and conducting assessments that naturally lead to service planning—with families actively involved throughout the process. The team has revised the format of the evaluation report so that it reflects the active role of the family by addressing their concerns in the context of their daily lives.

The team admits that the new report format and structure for assessment planning with the family was an evolving process as they

learned how to focus on the specific needs of the families they worked with. The hard work and research have paid off as the team and families work together to come up with a relevant, functional plan.

### Families’ reactions

What do families think of this approach? The Bottoms family thinks that it “makes more sense” to discuss concerns, observations, and suggestions about Nathaneal where he spends most of his time. It’s more comfortable and natural to discuss their baby in a familiar setting with familiar people. Stevie and Debbie also like the idea of being able to stay at home without interrupting their family’s routine to pack up all of Nathaneal’s necessities and travel to yet another appointment.

Rocky Mount CDSA currently is working toward implementing this same approach in the remaining counties they serve. Their Halifax/Northampton pilot team has been asked to present their approach at regional conferences and meetings; and the staff serving Edgecombe, Nash, Wilson, and Johnston counties have already been involved in training, research and planning for the unique areas and families they serve. It has been a rigorous shift from one model to another; but as team leader Cindy Clayton put it, “After seeing the results and benefits for the family through this new approach, I wouldn’t do it any other way.” **ATN!**

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- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, P.L. 108-446, 118 Stat. 2647 (2004).

# New standards for quality

## Changes in the Star Ratings



**by Peggy Ball**

Director, Division of Child Development  
North Carolina Department  
of Health and Human Services

**N**orth Carolina's five-star rated license is five years old, the first quality rating system in the nation to apply to all licensed child care programs. A 1-star rating indicates that a child care facility meets basic licensing requirements. Ratings of 2-5 stars are earned by meeting higher voluntary licensing standards. Since the star system began in 2000, there has been a significant increase in the number of programs earning ratings of 3-5 stars, allowing more children to be served by programs of higher quality.

### The current system

Under the current system, child care programs earn points for their star ratings in three different areas:

- ▶ Program Standards (including lower staff/child ratios, parent involvement, more activities or assessments of the classroom environment)
- ▶ Staff Education (teachers and directors have more education and experience)
- ▶ Compliance History (a percentage score that measures the number of

violations found in programs during the past three years).

National research has shown that Program Standards and Staff Education are the keys to quality. And after five years of implementation, our state results support that conclusion. For example, child abuse and neglect does not occur as often in programs where the staff have more education, but it still occurs in programs that have high scores for compliance.

It is true that a lot of child care programs currently achieve many of their licensing points in Compliance History. In fact, 90% of providers now maintain a Compliance History of 80% or higher. Since the Compliance History score is based on violations found during monitoring visits, it often depends on the number of visits made.

### The new system

This year, legislation (House Bill 707) was passed to revise North Carolina's star rating system. **The new law becomes effective January 1, 2006** and makes these changes to the rating system:

Of the children who are in child care centers, 77% are now enrolled in centers with ratings of 3 to 5 stars.

Of the children in family child care homes, 75% are now enrolled in homes with ratings of 3 to 5 stars.

Data provided by NC Division of Child Development

- Compliance History will no longer count toward a star rating. It will become the basic requirement for getting and keeping a license.
- The star rating of a child care program will be based on points earned in Program Standards and Staff Education.
- The minimum level of compliance to maintain a license will increase from 60% to 75%. However, the length of time for which compliance is calculated will decrease from the previous three years to the previous 18 months.

As of January 1, 2006, new child care programs that open and apply for ratings of 2-5 stars will earn star ratings under the revised system. The law allows child care programs currently operating to transition to the new rating system by January 1, 2008. In the meantime, existing programs scheduled for a three-year rating reassessment may choose to be evaluated with the revised rating system, or they may wait until the January 2008 deadline.

The Division of Child Development views these as positive changes to the star rating system. Parents will be able to look at star ratings with more confidence, since they will be based on truer measures of quality. Removing the compliance component from

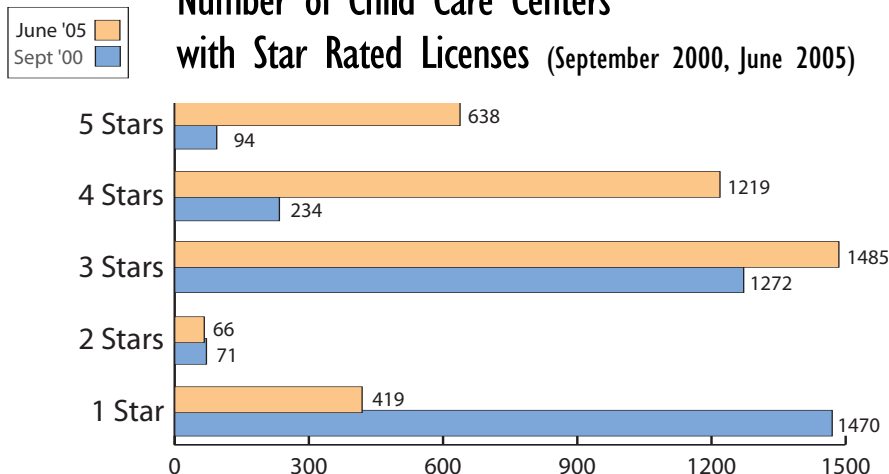
the star rating means that more options will be proposed for providers to earn points in the Program Standards and Staff Education components. In addition, shortening the timeframe for assessing compliance history will help providers working to improve their records accomplish this faster.

Now that the new standards have been passed into law, the NC Child Care Commission will work to develop specific rules to govern the modified licensing system. The Commission will solicit input from the general public on any proposed changes, and based on this feedback, the Commission will finalize the new star rated license system's

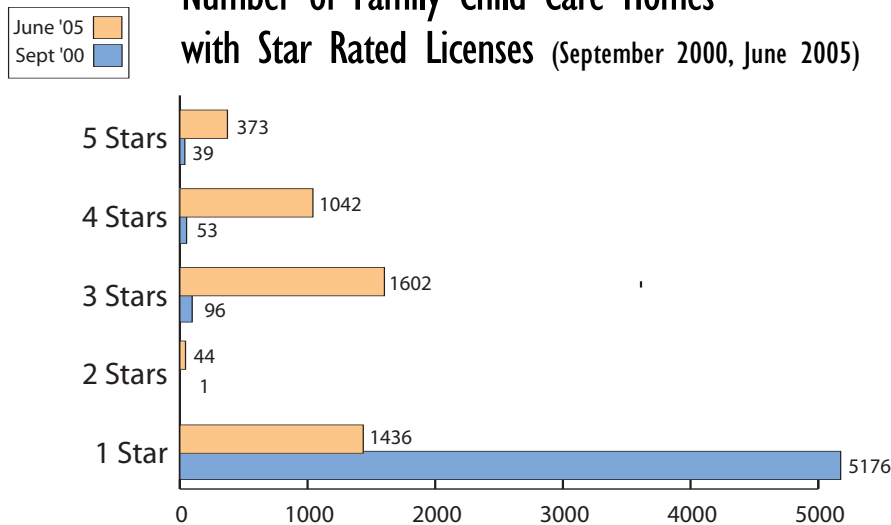
rules. This process has already started and is likely to continue through the fall.

The Division of Child Development welcomes the opportunity to work with child care programs as the rating system is revised. Once the changes are completed, we want to help providers plan for achieving the highest ratings possible. Child care programs in North Carolina are known nationally for their commitment to quality, and we appreciate the opportunity to continue efforts to improve services for North Carolina's children. **ATN!**

## Number of Child Care Centers with Star Rated Licenses (September 2000, June 2005)



## Number of Family Child Care Homes with Star Rated Licenses (September 2000, June 2005)





# Working with young English learners

## Benefits of bilingual learning

*Should young children who are learning English as a second language become bilingual? What is the influence of learning a second language on cognitive and literacy development? What strategies will assist young English learners and support their development?*



**Dina Castro, PH.D**  
Scientist, FPG Child  
Development Institute

**T**he diversity among the nation's population continues to increase and the rapid growth of the Latino population is contributing to this phenomenon. Latinos are now the largest minority in the United States and Spanish is the language spoken at many of their homes (U.S. Census, 2003).

In North Carolina Latinos grew by 394% in the 1990-2000 decade. Their average age was 26 years – a young population. Latino births are now up to 26% of total births in some counties, which forecasts a tremendous increase in the number of young Latino children needing child care. There are also immigrant and refugee families with young children arriving in the U.S. from other parts of the world. These new demographics mean that many early childhood professionals need new knowledge and skills related to teaching children of different cultures for whom English is not their home language.

### How children learn a second language?

Sometimes children learn two languages at the same time, beginning at birth or soon after. Other children may first learn their home language and then, after about age 5, begin to learn a new language. In some cases children who learn two languages retain both of them and become bilingual. In other cases children end up forgetting the first language they learned.

The process of learning a second language is influenced by many factors related to the child, family, early childhood setting, and community. One important factor is the age of the learner. There is a common assumption that the younger the child, the more quickly he will learn a second language. The literature in this area does not support this claim, though (see, for example, Bialystok & Hakuta, 1994; Long, 1990). It seems that older or mature learners have more cognitive skills to help them learn a second language. Younger learners, however, may end up speaking with more of a native accent.

### Positive effect of bilingualism

**Studies over the last four decades have shown positive effects of bilingualism on children's cognitive abilities.** Children who speak two languages perform at a more advanced level than their peers who speak only one language on the following tasks:

- ▮ comparing words by their meaning
- ▮ identifying repetition and contradictions in a statement
- ▮ judging the grammatical correctness of sentences in their two languages (Bialystok, 1991; Hakuta, 1987; Galambos & Goldin-Meadow, 1990)



- concept formation
- reasoning by analogy
- problem-solving (Bialystok & Majumder, 1998; see Reynolds, 1991, and Lee, 1996 for reviews).

## Impact on literacy

**Children who are English language learners are more likely to become readers and writers of English when they are already familiar with the concepts in their home language.** For example, phonological awareness has been found to be one of the strongest predictors of the speed and efficiency of reading acquisition (Scarborough, 1989). For English learners, some studies have shown that phonological awareness skills transfer from the first to the second language (Chiappe & Siegel, 1999; Cisero & Royer, 1995). With respect to other literacy skills, the alphabetic principle, concepts of print, and syntactic knowledge may transfer from the first to the second language, but only if these skills have been developed sufficiently in the primary language (Nagy, McClure, & Mir, 1997).

## When children lose the home language

**For children whose primary language is not English, studies show that strength in the home language not only promotes school achievement in the second language, but also ties the children to their families and communities** (Sánchez, 1999; Tabors, 1997; Wong-Fillmore, 1991). When children lose their home language, they lose all the positive effects of bilingualism and possibly the connections to family traditions and heritage. The consequences can be devastating for the child's social and emotional development and self-esteem.

## Implications for practice

The family plays a crucial role in helping immigrant children develop and keep their home language. This is especially true for those attending early childhood programs in which only English is spoken. But there is much early childhood programs can do to encourage the development of the home language while also teaching English to the young child. Most experts support the idea that learning two languages at the same

time does not cause confusion or language delays in young children. Teaching both languages actually makes learning English easier (August & Hakuta, 1997; Bialystok, 2001). Although many programs are finding ways to hire or access bilingual/bicultural teachers, additional strategies that can be used by both, bilingual and non-bilingual teachers to support development of two languages are:

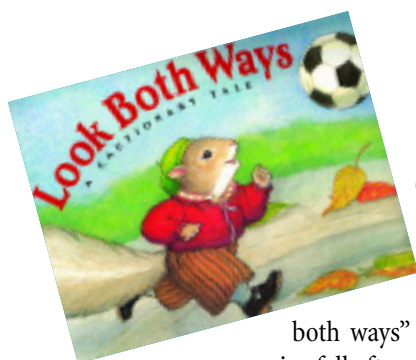
- Provide a language and literacy-rich classroom environment with written materials and activities in both languages; encourage verbal interactions where children may use either their home language or English.
- If you speak only English, learn a few words in the child's home language to welcome, congratulate, or celebrate. Ask young English learners or their parents to teach you some!
- Encourage children to teach some words in their home language to their English speaking classmates.
- Invite the parents of the young English learners to participate in activities that involve the use of their home language
- Explain the positive effects of bilingualism to parents of young English speakers. Encourage them to support the development of their child's first language at home

Language and culture are so closely related that we cannot address one without affecting the other. Developing an appreciation for bilingualism should happen in the context of a multicultural curriculum.

Teachers need to learn effective practices to support language and literacy development in young English learners. There is a need for intensive professional development on this topic, including revising teacher preparation programs in the state colleges and universities to ensure that all early childhood teachers are prepared to offer our young English learners the opportunity to succeed in school and in life. **ATN!**

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## Look Both Ways

by Diana Z. Shore  
illustrated by Teri Weidner  
Bloomsbury Children's Books  
ISBN 1-58234-968-1

This charming book is called "a cautionary tale."

Filbert the Squirrel is told by his mama to "look both ways" before he goes out in the crisp fall afternoon to play soccer with his friends. Later, on his way to his grand-mama's house for more acorns, he forgets her advice while crossing the street and nearly runs into trouble! Your children will love the illustrations in this well-drawn book. The text is easy to read, and the book is rich with the feeling of fall color. Illustrator Teri Weidner brings squirrels to life in the jackets, caps, and scarves of another era. This is a timeless book with a practical message. It's a good lesson and a treat, especially if you like acorn soup!



## Earth Mother

by Ellen Jackson  
illustrated by Leo & Diane Dillon  
Walker & Company  
ISBN 0-8027-8992-7

This outstandingly beautiful fable is set in a mythical African savannah. We see the Earth Mother awaken and visit each of the creatures there: the Man, the Frog, the Otter, even the Mosquito. She listens to their needs and hears their complaints about the other creatures. Effortlessly she glides across the vast fields and mountains, dives deep into the ocean to swim with whales, hurls lightning into the sky! Reminiscent of African and Oceanic creation tales, this slyly humorous story allows children to see that each person, animal, and bug in our world is part of a greater perfection. The illustration style is partly African, partly American, and all beautiful. A great introduction to new cultural concepts!

## Grandpa's Angel

by Jutta Bauer  
Candlewick Press  
ISBN 0-7636-2743-7



Award-winning artist and animator Jutta Bauer has been writing for German audiences for more than twenty years. Using a simple cartooning style and very little text, Bauer shows us how Grandpa grew and survived the misadventures of childhood, the political danger of the Nazi period, the World War and adult life, all through the continual help of a kindly guardian angel! At face value this is a simple illustration of the ups and downs of an entire life, drawn in pictures children and adults can understand. More deeply, this is a statement of faith, a reminder that life frequently is difficult, but full of joy. Highly recommended.

## Black Meets White

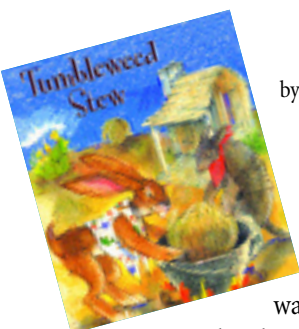
by Justine Fontes  
illustrated by Geoff Waring  
Candlewick Press  
ISBN 0-7636-1933-7



A fantastic new color book with only two colors? Justine Fontes brings us a wonderful toddler's introduction to two of our favorite colors, black and white. Accompanied by a pink mouse, B&W get together to make Polka Dots, Checkerboards, Stripes, Wiggles, and more. But the last combination is the best, and it's a surprise. This high quality book design has peek-through pages, cut-out pages, and surprise pages. It's wonderful to look at, and constructed for plenty of use.

## **Tumbleweed Stew**

by Susan Stevens Crummel  
illustrated by Janet Stevens  
Green Light/Harcourt  
ISBN 0-15-204870-7



When Jack Rabbit wakes up in the morning at the ole Two-Circle Ranch, the first thing he thinks of is food! So he hops on down to rustle up some grub, in this case a big pot of Tumbleweed Stew. But there's no such thing as Tumbleweed Stew! The clever Jack persuades the Armadillo, the Buzzard, the Deer, and the Skunk to contribute vegetables to add to the soup pot. Even the Rattlesnake slides by with some celery! The stew smells better every minute, and when it's done, they have a feast. This tale is written in rhyme, and is very engaging to read aloud to toddlers. Young readers will get a kick out of the western twang that just naturally goes with Tumbleweed Stew!

## **Three Feet Small**

by Michael J. Rosen  
illustrated by Valeri Gorbachev  
Gulliver/Harcourt  
ISBN 0-15-204938-X

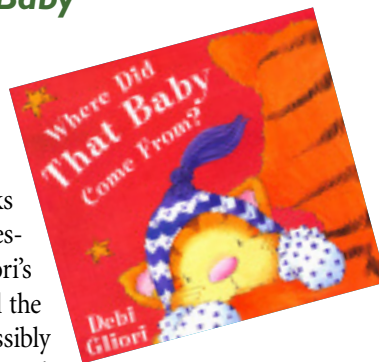


Being a little bear isn't easy when all the world around you seems to be built for Big People! In this warm look at the trials of being small, Rosen's subtly rhymed text is fun to read and believable. Pen and ink illustrations bring a whole family of bears to life: mother, father, sister, uncle, and grandfather all show up to help the little guy understand that he might—just might—be growing bigger! We see the little bear attending school, learning to swim, riding his bike, going shopping for new

clothes, and playing games. In each activity we see his confidence increase, and in the end he is convinced he will someday be a Big Bear too.

## **Where Did That Baby Come From?**

by Debi Gliori  
Harcourt  
ISBN 0-15-205373-5

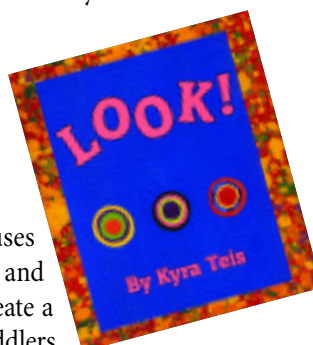


Asking a question that ranks high in the list of "hard questions to answer," Debi Gliori's little tiger cub muses on all the places his parents could possibly have found their new baby cub.

With drawing so funny it can make you laugh aloud, she explores the possibilities— from the reaches of outer space to the rose garden next door. Along the way we hear some observations about what babies seem to be best at, and what they clearly cannot do. Written in rhyme from a child's perspective, this read-aloud book is wonderful for children who have younger siblings. Best of all, the ending of the book affirms that babies are loveable and fun, and definitely from the same planet as the rest of us—although some days their parents may not think so!

## **Look!**

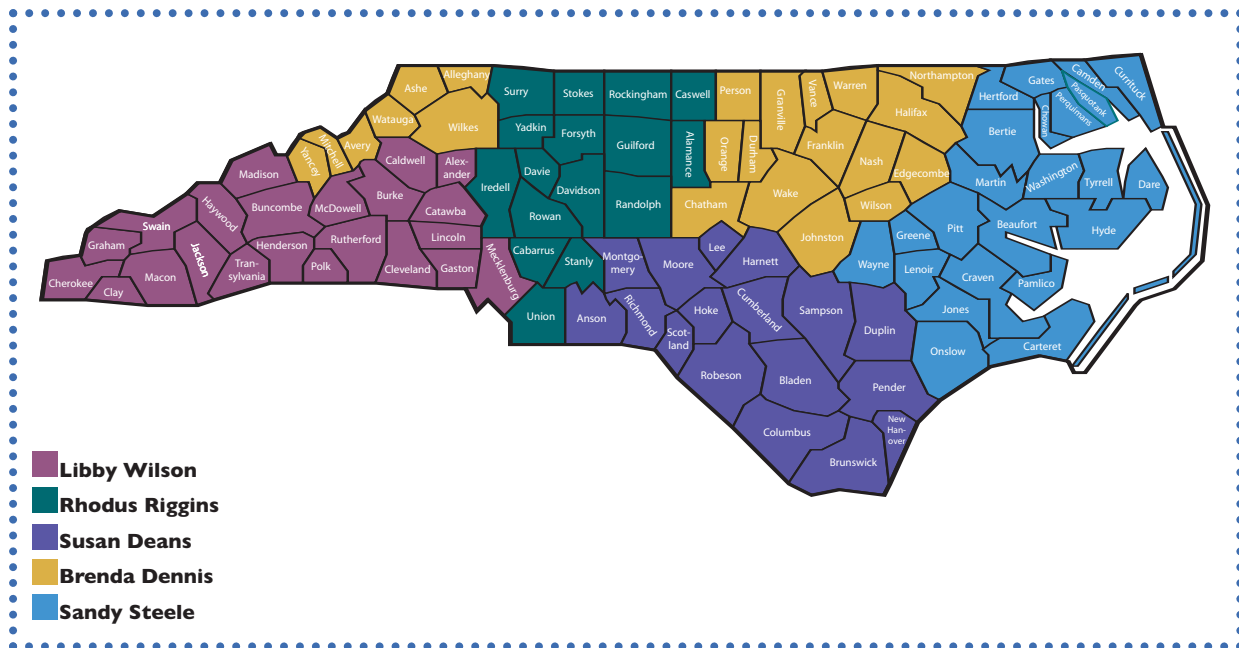
by Kyra Teis  
Starbright Books  
ISBN 1-59572-022-7



Young painter Kyra Teis uses watercolor, paper collage and other mixed media to create a lovely color book for toddlers. Bound in 6x6 board for easy page-turning, this is a read-aloud book for children learning their colors, and features a minimum of text. Teis' artwork is abstract and fluid, full of shapes and bright colors to be interpreted and learned by each child. A very creative book!

by  
**Brady Fowler**  
To check out books reviewed in  
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From NCEI website updated July 27, 2005

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# The circle of friends



**by Lisa Figueroa**

Lisa is a pediatrician  
in Greenville NC.

**M**y son Jacob was diagnosed with autism a few weeks after his second birthday. I've always wanted to believe that his diagnosis was a surprise, but in my heart I knew that he was different. Because Jacob is a fraternal twin, I could not escape the fact that his development was not following the same path as his twin brother. As a pediatrician I found myself observing him constantly, when all I wanted was to be his mother.

After his diagnosis, Jacob received all of the early intervention services provided by our county. The support I received from so many therapists and other service providers was wonderful. When Jacob was ready for preschool it became clear to our family that a developmental preschool or a classroom consisting only of autistic children was not enough. We wanted Jacob to be included in typical settings, not self-contained settings. There were very few opportunities for a child with autism to interact with typically developing children. We realized that we would have to create these opportunities and experiences for Jacob.

I enrolled Jacob and his brother in the Child Development Laboratory (CDL) at the local university. All of their peers at the CDL were developing in a typical fashion. While Jacob was there he required an assistant and also received



various therapies. It was an opportunity for him to learn from his peers. It was not only a great experience for Jacob, but also for the other children who gained a lot from being with a "different" child at such an early age. Jacob's participation in the CDL was such a success that since then, other children with special needs have gone through the program.

## Entering school

When Jacob started kindergarten at South Greenville Elementary School, he went into a regular classroom with a personal assistant. Although he was able to keep up with the academics, the gap between his communication and social skills was noticeable. I wanted to address this gap to help him be successful in an inclusive classroom. The other children were very curious about Jacob. They were interested in his use of pictures for communication and thought that all his "adapted materials" were very cool. I realized that although my initial focus was helping Jacob fit in with his peers and their world, the children were also eager to learn more about Jacob's world.

Although I met with the children at the beginning of each school year to talk with them about

Jacob, his wonderful abilities, and the challenges he faces, I wanted to do more.

I thought of ways to address his social interactions with his peers and their knowledge and comfort around an autistic classmate. Why not incorporate some of Jacob's academic goals into a play group? It could be fun and provide other opportunities to reinforce learning goals for Jacob. By focussing on learning through play all these elements could be integrated to benefit all the children.

## The Circle of Friends

When Jacob entered first grade I began an after-school play group called: "The Circle of Friends." This play group allowed Jacob to play and learn with classmates in our own home. We held play group monthly. The four children who were designated as Jacob's "peer helpers" each week were invited to participate. By the end of the school year the entire class of 20 – 23 children had all participated in The Circle of Friends.

Each play group session had a literacy activity, a cooking activity, and a craft activity. I chose activities related to what was being taught in school. This allowed me to take a topic, adapt materials for it so that it met Jacob's IEP goals, and then present it to Jacob and his friends as a play activity.

The structure of the play group didn't detract from fun and play. Within each activity the children always had the flexibility to move around,

choose where to sit, create their own work and express themselves.

## Back to the classroom

I took digital pictures at every play group and made memory books for all the children. They would use the books at school in their writing centers. In Jacob's memory book, the narrative has evolved over time, beginning with my writing, then evolving to Jacob's using his *Pixwriter* software, and finally to Jacob's own writing in second grade. In order to share the play group, I created E-books the whole class could see with a web browser on the classroom computer.

## Signs of success

The Circle of Friends has just completed its second year. We have had 11 play groups and I have seen their remarkable effect on Jacob, his friends and the school community. The parents and teachers have all been very receptive to the idea and look forward to its continuation. I am very pleased and plan to continue the play group as Jacob moves through the grades!

Jacob has learned to communicate in a variety of settings, to participate in interactive and turn-taking activities, and has developed an interest in learning from his friends by watching them and imitating their actions when we do crafts and cooking activities. These skills of cooperation and imitation transfer to his shared activities in school.

The children have learned to be patient with Jacob and have learned quite successfully to use the picture exchange communication system (PECS) to "speak" to Jacob. What they learn about Jacob at the play groups contributes to his positive inclusive experience at school. Jacob and his friends have learned to play with each other and enjoy each other!

## Impact on family

An unexpected benefit from The Circle of Friends has been the involvement of my whole family. It's a joy to look back at the pictures and see my husband baking bread with the children or my teenage son making a surprise appear-



ance dressed as a clown when we had our first dress-up play group with a circus theme.

The impact on Jacob's twin brother Nicholas has been the most dramatic. Nicholas has always been kind, loving and patient with Jacob. However, it was clear to me that he really didn't see his brother as a fun and interactive playmate. But, I think that seeing how the other children interact and play with Jacob—how much fun they have together—has given Nicholas an entirely new perspective of what they can do for fun together. It brings tears to my eyes when they seek each other out to play.

## Learning and friendship

The Circle of Friends is actually "a circle within a circle." The outer circle is made up of the friendships Jacob brings into our home, the experiences he shares with others in the natural environment of his home, in the presence of his personal things and family. An inner circle grows through relationships cultivated at school where Jacob and his peers learn from each other. The integration and connection of these two circles is what makes The Circle of Friends a bond of learning and friendship. **ATN!**



# Independence Day is every day

## The Easter Seals UCP Summer Moore Children's Center



**by Caroline Butler**

Caroline is an early childhood consultant and former preschool teacher.

**G**reenville in steamy eastern North Carolina feels warmly familiar. Home to my college alma mater East Carolina University, it's where I started my work in the field of early childhood. Through simultaneous experiences in East Carolina University's School of Education, and with my then infant son, a fascination with child development began.

Now, thirty-plus years later, I'm back, this time to learn about a NAEYC Accredited, Five Star center in Greenville that has a reputation among developmental day centers for its excellence in program quality and inclusive practices. We want to find out how Easter Seals UCP Summer Moore Children's Center fosters children's development and learning and accomplishes inclusion with such success.

### Attention to details

Summer Moore sits near the southern edge of ECU's campus in a wooded residential



area. Beside the church that in 1972 first gave it a home, the preschool now resides in the attractive contemporary building that was built just for them in 1992.

When approaching Summer Moore, my eyes are drawn to the ornamentation: a large wooden sun rising above the windows out front. As I move towards the entry, the sidewalk changes color from grey to sea blue with brightly painted fish swimming together toward and around the entrance of the preschool. I'm immediately impressed by these images.

### A cool place to be

As we begin our tour of Summer Moore, director Gwen Miller doesn't hesitate when asked what about the program makes her most proud. "The quality of care we provide," she responds, "and our incredible staff who



are totally committed to our mission of fully including children.” Off we go to have a look.

First stop is the Infant/Toddler classroom, where quality indicators abound. Summer Moore has figured out how to provide a safe and healthy program for its youngest students while it supports them emotionally and cognitively. We see through the floor-level windows that the Sweet Peas are playing right outside of their room.

Gwen leads me outdoors to a large enclosed playground with a shaded portico. “Infants and toddlers in diapers, playing with water!” I exclaim. Then I notice the play areas’s cushioned blue surfacing where physical play and sensory motor activities are happening safely and with no fuss about messes. Instead, three cheerful adults play with children, supervising responsively. One of them is teacher Jackie Reed who’s a born nurturer. Having worked here for 13 years, Jackie offers a dependable relationship that research shows young children need.

Little ones with and without special needs play together using miniature active play equipment. My excitement is hard to repress. This is what we came to see.

## Beliefs guide practice

Gwen has directed Summer Moore for four years. A dedicated spokesperson for her program and for inclusion, she tells me “We believe in inclusion and make that happen,” in part, through NAEYC recommended lower child-staff ratios and extensive staff training. As an inclusion specialist for a total of 18 years, Gwen knows first hand the link



**If you listen, you can hear the ocean!**

between high quality child care and positive outcomes for children. That’s why she and her staff work so hard to provide a program with a top notch learning environment.

What’s seems unique here is that the program goes beyond child care standards for quality, and beyond developmental day standards for its specialized services. There’s an ongoing reflection by staff that guides program practices.

“Our challenge,” says Gwen, “is (for staff) to evaluate daily how children can participate.” That means evaluating, planning, and monitoring how to address children’s goals and special therapies within the natural routines and activities of a preschool. To this end the preschool environment, activities, materials, and adaptive equipment are considered. Especially important, staff and therapists discuss how they can foster all children’s play and interactions with each other.

Does this require special training for staff? Gwen shares, “We’ve found that the best way for staff to learn is to show them and include them.” With this in mind, the therapy team (a speech therapist, occupational therapist [OT], and physical therapist [PT]) develops lesson plans that imbed children’s goals into regular classroom activities, and work alongside staff to support their implementation

## Independence Day

Today, decked out in red, white, and blue costumes, the therapy team is ready for what they call their “Road Show.” The whole group of Little Explorers gather in their classroom to join a July 4th celebration while therapists lead related activities.

“We’re putting it on,” models speech therapist Alison Lehman as she places some tape on a paper roll, making a streamer. Later she asks the group, “What color do we have in this flag?” “What color is your favorite?” Savannah waves her flag and responds “My color is red.” Occupational therapist Jane Kester discretely shows teachers how to stabilize Shaheen’s shoulders so he can wave his flag too.

Physical therapist Janice Hill monitors AJ in his stander as a friend helps him to put beans in his shaker. Children want to be helpers, but need guidance. “So,” Gwen explains “typically developing children are coached to be helpers, then it becomes natural.”

There seems to be a synergy between Summer Moore’s therapy team and teachers. “We all know child development and are experienced generalists” explains Janice, “This means we consider the whole child,” when providing therapy services. They take into account the child’s interests as well as strengths and needs in all of the developmental areas.





Definitely a cool place to be!

## Quality & Leadership

Easter Seals UCP Summer Moore Children's Center is accredited by the Council for Quality and Leadership (CQL).

CQL was founded in 1969, as a council of the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Hospitals. CQL has evolved to an independent accrediting organization, and an international leader in defining, measuring, and evaluating quality of life for people with disabilities.

*"We believe in a world of dignity, opportunity and community inclusion for all people. In fact, our commitment to this belief is renewed and strengthened each day as we work to provide vision and leadership to human services organizations world wide. Through our services, publications and public presence, we establish real connections between disabilities theory and practice and help those who work with people with disabilities and people with mental illness take the important step from innovative ideas to everyday action."*

If you'd like to learn more about the CQL and the certification, training, accreditation, and resources it offers, look at their comprehensive website at: [www.thecouncil.org](http://www.thecouncil.org)

Their approach as generalists began when the three worked together for many years providing arena assessments at the area's Developmental Evaluation Center (now called Children's Developmental Service Agency). They've worked together here for about 10 years. What keeps these great staff at Summer Moore? "The work situation is so good!" says speech therapist Alison Lehman.

### Belief in personal outcomes

The program practices what it believes as stated in the center's parent handbook, *"What we believe: All children have the right to learn and play together. Families are the most important members of our team. Families know their needs and choose their goals, working as a team with families and professionals to assist in the child's successful development."*

Parents aren't just repeating what they've read when they say "I feel like the most important member of the team," Gwen assures.

Summer Moore is proactive in its methods of empowering parents (and staff). The number one strategy is building relationships. Everyone participates in a process to develop personal outcomes for children and families based on their identified hopes and dreams. The center offers support to families to achieve these personal goals. Summer Moore does so well at helping families to meet their personal outcomes that the center recently became reaccredited by the Council on Quality and Leadership (CQL).

Parents are involved in policy decisions, serve on Summer Moore's advisory board,

and meet with staff to develop goals for their children. It isn't just children with disabilities who have goals. Children with more typical development have developmental screenings and goals if their parents choose.

### Tone of creativity

Busy Bees Christopher, Braden, and Sandra roll red paint, totally engaged. "Mui bonita," admires Gwen as Sandra proudly shows her painting. Sandra, whose home language is Spanish, often corrects staff who take Spanish classes.

Summer Moore staff tailor curricula for the children, ages 3 months through 5 years, who attend its five classes. This requires constant and ongoing curriculum development using a mix of curricula, such as the *Creative Curriculum* (Dodge, 2002; Dombro, 1999) and *Conscious Discipline* (Bailey, 2000).

Lots of the Crayola Kids will soon enter kindergarten. Public school staff praise the Summer Moore program. They notice how independent the children are and their ability to solve problems. While playing a flag picture game, Carly and Christina communicate their wants and needs to each other. What they've been coached to say now comes spontaneously. This skill will serve them well as both children make their way in big school.

### Made in the shade

Following the Crayola class, we move directly out their door onto the 3-5 year old playground. A sidewalk from each of the 3 classrooms forms a trail for wheel toys, wheel chairs, and foot travelers. Like a village path



it leads to outdoor activities that delight the senses, encourage children to move and to interact with friends.

We come to a colorful multilevel climber made accessible with a ramp. Marta and Michael, however, together choose to take on the challenge of using their upper body and leg strength to navigate the steps. Reaching the top of the low platform, they cross over the bridge hand in hand.

In another designated area, helmeted children zip by as they ride or push wheel toys, or as a teacher pushes their chair. Swings and trikes are adapted for children with disabilities. Children are helped to access activities.

As temperatures rise, players (child and adult) take refuge from the sun in activities under canvas canopies and trees. A favorite shaded area cools the sandbox, fully equipped for digging, scooping, and moving earth. It is nice to see a playground designed to promote all children's physical activity, in sun and shade.

### Parent and teacher

We find Rene Bowden with the Sweet Peas. A parent of two children here and an inclusion specialist for the preschool's ECHOES program, Rene's previous ATN! article



piqued our interest in Summer Moore." As it turns out, she's taken the position of education coordinator for the preschool!

Today Rene gently rocks new student, three-month-old Delany. On her first day in the infant-toddler class, Delany will begin school gradually by spending a few hours a day with her mother nearby. This important transition has been planned carefully by her family and staff.

Here's another example of values that lead to quality. Summer Moore places what's best for children and what families want above convenience. It embraces creative solutions. We now understand why after her first visit to Summer Moore, Rene thought, "I just have to work here."

### A wish for the future

As I departed, floating through my mind were thoughts of infants and toddlers splashing in water; children learning hand in hand; happy, busy, creative staff; families who experience their true importance and power.

Standing on the blue sidewalk, fish at my feet, I gaze back at the outdoor play area designed for infants, toddlers and twos. I remember the director's hopes and dreams for the future of Summer Moore, "That we can sustain this program during these challenging fiscal times." And so do we, I thought. With a glint of pride in her eyes, Gwen reflects, "Such wonderful things happen here." And so they do. **ATN!**

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Marta and Michael explore the playground

# Developing skills in natural ways

*Why is it important to embed instruction within naturally occurring activities?*



**by Libby  
Wilson**

Libby is PFI's Western  
Region inclusion  
specialist.

**B**eginning as far back as the early 1980s, early childhood educators have emphasized the value of using naturally occurring activities as teaching opportunities. Naturally occurring activities can be daily routines, an activity that a child initiates, or an activity planned by a teacher.

Research shows that learning opportunities are likely to be more meaningful when they take place within familiar events in the child's life, rather than when they are formally structured by an adult. When the task is meaningful to the child, the child is more likely to be motivated to attempt a new skill or practice to improve. In addition, when a child learns a skill in a naturally occurring activity, he or she is more likely to use that skill again.

In the "old way" a teacher, parent or therapist might begin by thinking, "I need to work with Sara on using a

pincer grasp. What activity can I plan for her that will provide opportunities for her to use a pincer grasp?" In the "new way" the adult would be more likely to think, "Sara can participate in more play and self-help activities if she learns to pick up small objects. What activities occur during the day or in natural activities, during which picking up small objects using a pincer grasp will be useful and rewarding to her?"

Adults working with children on skill development often ask...

***How can I work on individual skills with one child without pulling that child aside to work one-on-one, especially when the other children don't need to work on that skill?***

Consider the following:



- Is the skill going to be useful and meaningful to the child right away?
- When during the day is that skill most likely to be used/needed?
- When do other children who have the skill use it?
- When (what time of day or during what activity) will the child be most motivated to use the skill?

When a skill is useful it is likely that other children already use the skill or they are also learning the skill. This makes it more likely that an activity the children already do involves that skill. Think about when that skill is likely to be useful to all of the children. When other children are participating in the activity there will be more opportunities for you to work with individual children without planning a separate activity or time to do so.

Another question often asked is...

***What if opportunities do not occur naturally? How do I provide enough opportunities without going back to adult-directed activities?***

Consider the following:

- What activities occur naturally in other settings that could be incorporated into your setting?
- What typical child interests, activities or games require that skill or an approximation of it?
- Could an activity be expanded to incorporate that skill in a way that would be meaningful and motivating to the children?

In their book *An Activity-Based Approach to Early Intervention, Third*

*Edition*, Kristi Pretti-Frontczak and Dianne Bricker say, “learning opportunities need to be relevant or meaningful to children for them to benefit from the learning opportunity. Useful learning opportunities should match the child’s current developmental abilities, be tailored to his or her interests and prompt the child to practice target goals within the context of authentic activities or transactions.” This book is available at the North Carolina Early Intervention Library: ([www.ncei-eclibrary.org](http://www.ncei-eclibrary.org).) It’s an excellent resource with clear descriptions, practical examples and suggestions, as well as reproducible forms! **ATN!**

# Encounter at the puppet show

*Brady Fowler toured North Carolina from 1983 to 1990 as Lead Puppeteer and Artistic Director of his own theatre company, **Puppet Express**. He appeared in 30 counties across the state and played for 75,000 children, parents, and teachers. Beginning in October he will be appearing exclusively in San Diego.*



**by Brady Fowler**  
ATN! editor and  
professional puppeteer.

I was sweating. I struggled to untangle the marionette while I tried to converse calmly with the nice librarian. You always have to make it look easy, even when you're a little frazzled. There's No Business Like Show Business. My last puppet show in NC—I'll be on the West Coast in six weeks—was shaping up to be a challenge.

Ten minutes inside the building and already in a hurry! I got the string puppet straightened out and rushed to set up my little touring theatre. First, arrange the playboard and front drape. Unload the hand puppets and place them and their props within reach. Check the sight lines. Test the sound quality in the room. Hmm, lots of echoes. This would be a noisy auditorium, a real challenge. I took five minutes for rest and a drink of water and we opened the doors.

It was a scorching Sunday at the local library when I began my show for a hundred or so children and parents. On a hot day in a bouncy acoustical space, I really had to concentrate to get the performance to work for all the different ages and levels of interest in a group of kids from preschool to second grade!

My show is a highly interactive demonstration of all kinds of puppets: slap-happy carpenters, rough 'n ready cowboys, and a little marionette who talks like a pint-sized stand-up comedian. But the one they all love is Rory the Lion, the long-time star of my show "*A Lion in My Lunchbox*," and of course, as in every show since 1983, Rory steals my lunchbox while I am talking to the audience and hides it in the theatre's basement. Guess what Rory finds when he's down in the basement? A big green dragon with fangs and bulgy eyes!

The show gets pretty funny at this point. Rory runs around panicking, and I faint from fear, but the dragon, a nice guy named Lewis—he claims to be from Hoboken—ends up closing the show with a warm wish to everyone in the audience to "Have a great Life, and remembuh to use yer Imagination every day..." At the end of the show I come out from behind my stage and the kids line up to see the how the puppets work.

But at this show I had a new experience. A little boy about 5 years old stood in line to meet the puppets. In fact Lewis even gave him a little "dragon bite" on his outstretched hand. Then I called it quits and went back

to put the puppets away and take down my stage.

A moment later the same boy tugged at my sleeve.

“Excuse me, my brother wants to meet the dragon too.” He told me his brother’s name and pointed him out.

I looked up and saw another boy, a year older perhaps. He was standing apart, hugging himself and looking at us. I thought about everything I have learned working on this magazine—I had a feeling about this child. With the dragon on my arm I moved to a quiet corner and got on my knees. I looked into his eyes.

“Would you like to meet the dragon too?”

He nodded and moved a little closer. He was shy but very interested in the big green dragon. Lewis said hello to him and very politely (dragons are always polite) offered to bite his hand. I watched the boy closely and asked him if he would like the dragon to bite him. He nodded again and I asked him to stretch out his arm.

His eyes got big as he watched the dragon nibbling on his fingers. Gently I pulled Lewis back from him and looked at him, checking to make sure he wasn’t afraid.

“Did you like meeting the dragon?”

For a moment his eyes met mine and he nodded emphatically. Then he hugged himself a little more and stepped away to where his mother was standing nearby. I had been so preoccupied I hadn’t seen her.

I was about to ask about her older son when the younger brother stepped up and looked directly at me. He had a calm clear gaze, and he said, “My brother really liked your show a lot! But sometimes it’s hard for him to tell you, because he has autism.”

I told him how happy I was to meet him and his brother, and the older boy looked at me again, then looked away and spoke as his mother picked him up. I didn’t understand what he said, but his mother told me it was a phrase he used when he enjoyed something.

My work had made him really happy, and his little brother knew that he could tell me—that he ought to tell me. I had taken part in a moment of real inclusion, and I knew again how great it feels to make a child feel special.

They trailed out with the rest of the audience. The space emptied to a still, quiet room, and I had a moment to think about the remarkable interaction that took place between me, my puppets, and a boy with autism. **ATN!**



Rory and Brady

## ATN! moves to online format

After 10 years of producing ATN as a paper magazine and mailing it to 25,000 readers, staff at PFI are now thinking of a change.

In response to limited funding for 2005-2006, we hope to transform the magazine into an on-line publication only, available exclusively through the PFI website at [www.fpg.unc.edu/~pfi](http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~pfi)

As you know, previous copies of ATN! are available as downloadable .pdf files on our web site now. We plan to rebuild ATN! into a genuinely web-based magazine—easy to access and easy to read online. We will work to launch the new online version of ATN! next spring.

So, although this is not a farewell, this is the last paper version of ATN! Due to the time it takes to develop our web-based product, there won’t be a Winter edition. So look for a notice in your mail after the new year announcing the next ATN! issue—live on the World Wide Web!

# Reaching the

# 5 Stars

Programs awarded April 2005 through August 2005 or not previously listed.

Ash	Jessie Mae Monroe Preschool	Durham	Brown's Day Care	Morven	Loving Care Day Care Home
Bessemer City	Perfected Praise Child Care		Yates Baptist Child Development Center	Newton	Longview Elementary Kid Connection
Boonville	Boonville Out-Of-School Time		Bright Beginnings		Startown Elementary Kid Connection
Brevard	Brevard Elementary More At Four		Gray's Small Wonders Daycare		St. Stephens Elementary Kid Connection
Cary	Bright Horizons At Preston Corners	Eden	Patricia's Precious Moments		Southwest Elementary Kid Connection
	Bright Horizons Family Solutions	Edenton	Pasquotank / Camden Head Start		Clyde Campbell Elementary Kid Connection
Chapel Hill	Estes Hills School-Age Care Program	Gastonia	Children Of Excellence Christian Child Care	Pendleton	Willis Hare Elementary School
	Frank Porter Graham School-Age Care Program	Greensboro	Lindley Elementary Preschool	Raleigh	Edenton Street United Methodist Child Dev. Ctr.
	McDougle School Age Care Program		Joey's Room (Room At The Inn Of The Triad)	Randleman	Level Cross Elementary School Pre-K
Charlotte	Paul Yazejian's Home Day Care	Hendersonville	Glenn Marlow P5am-P5pm-Plus	Red Springs	South Hoke Elementary Pre-K Program
	Oaklawn Elementary ASEP	Hickory	Shuford Elementary Kid Connection	Salisbury	Troy Head Start Center
	The Jewish Preschool On Sardis		Bugs And Butterflies Child Care	Shelby	Chosen Ones
	Ida's Child Development Center	Indian Trail	Porter Ridge Elementary After School	Siler City	Goldston Head Start
	Hawk Ridge Elementary ASEP	Jacksonville	Kiddin' Around		Siler City Head Start
	Neighborhood Day Care Home		Above Average Childcare	Spindale	Carver Head Start
	Tae Boo Kiddie		Luv 4 Kids	Statesville	Sharon Prime Time For Kids
	Sand's Day Care	Jefferson	Mountain View Elementary Pre-K	Tarboro	Roberson Elementary School
Cherryville	Home Away From Home		4-H Westwood Afterschool	Trinity	Honeycomb Kids
Climax	A Special Place...For Infants And Toddlers	Jonesville	Jonesville Out-Of-School-Time Program	Winston Salem	Children's Choice Learning Center
Clinton	Precious Child Day Care	Kings Mountain	Brown's Little Shepherds		Children First
Concord	A. T. Allen Kids: Plus		Step By Step Development Child Care	Yadkinville	Unique Wonders Child Care
Dallas	Cline Learning Center Of Dallas III	Lexington	Pickett Primary School		Yadkinville Out-Of-School-Time Program
	Little Angel's Preschool	Lincolnton	Mrs. Peg's Care For God's Precious Gifts		
	Kennedy's Kids Kare	Lumber Bridge	Sandy Grove Elementary Pre-K Program		
	Willie's Development Home For Kids	Midway Park	D & S First Step Daycare		
Dobson	Dobson Elementary School Pre-K School Ready	Monroe	Marshville Elementary Afterschool		
		Mooresville	Shepherd Prime Time For Kids		
			Lakeshore Prime Time For Kids		
			Lake Norman Prime Time For Kids		

Please note: Partnerships for Inclusion does not compile this list. It comes from the Division of Child Development.



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